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artist claims these portions of the Liturgy as his own peculiar province; and the claim is sanctioned by the Church's authority, and supported by the Church's practice during three hundred years. What the Mass has been to artists who have written for the Roman Communion—a theme to test their highest powers, and to inspire the noblest emanations of their genius—has been the English substitution for the Mass, and the songs of praise special to Morning and Evening Service to musicians who have wrought for the Church of this country.

(To be continued.)

THERE can be no question that, were it possible to probe the feelings of many persons who are professedly enjoying themselves, we should find that there is, at heart, an utter want of interest in what they are doing or hearing; and, in nine cases out of ten, that they are thoroughly wearied, and secretly longing for the time when the so-called "pleasure" shall come to an end. Place yourself side by side with a family of the working classes returning from a "day out," and see whether the holiday has made any one of them a bit more happy. Take the full advantage of "nine hours at the sea-side," and ask yourself coolly and dispassionately the next morning whether you really mean to do it again. Go to "Paris and back," with free admissions to all the "enjoyments," and see whether the greatest "enjoyment" is not the return to your own English home. And yet all these methods of passing the time are so fully and universally recognised that few persons allow their reason to guide them in the matter: what everybody calls pleasure must be so; and if you cannot enter into it you must not be surprised if you are called either a misanthrope or a fool.

Now we have latterly been led to the conclusion that a large number of those who habitually patronise bad music, with the notion that good music is "dreary" or "slow," are precisely in the position of the deluded individuals we have described; and that, so far from having contrasted the two styles of art and selected the one which gives them the most gratification, they have, in reality, never thought about the matter at all.

Let us walk into this music-hall. The entrance is bright and inviting, for cheerful lights and brilliant flowers are on each side of us as we tender our money for admission. We open the door; and, although we hear something, we see nothing, for a cloud of tobacco-smoke obscures every object in the room. We grope our way to a seat, and "give our orders." The utmost regularity prevails throughout the room; for an important-looking gentleman occupies the chair (with his "orders" before him on a table), and he is responsible for the good conduct of the visitors. Somebody enters on the stage, with a red nose, whitened cheeks, and his hat crushed out of all imaginable shape. A round of applause greets his appearance; for he is "jolly" by name, if not by nature. We refer to our programme, and find that he is about to sing an "immense" song, which we have been told is the great hit of the day. As the composition is comic, we are desirous of watching the effect of it upon the listeners, not unreasonably expecting that convulsions of laughter will follow every verse. The song proceeds: not a smile is raised; on the contrary, as the humour accumulates, the countenances of the audience assume an air of settled melancholy resignation. At the end the

applause is deafening; a buzz of conversation ensues, and gradually the assembly settles down to endure the next item in the programme. The following night the same numbers attend—the same scene is enacted—everybody says it is "awful fun," and the establishment flourishes.

Now let us, in imagination, transport ourselves to a conventional evening party. It has been decided that there shall be a little music; and a young lady has seated herself at the pianoforte with a something "de Salon" before her, fourteen pages long, and bristling with demisemiquavers. How much feeling for art is there either in her mind or her fingers? Has her musical faculty ever been cultivated even to the power of phrasing a single bar of the simplest Sonata in existence? In truth, music has nothing whatever to do with the exhibition, clever and brilliant as it undoubtedly is. It is equivalent to throwing up a number of balls and catching them, without dropping one; dancing on the tight-rope, without falling off; or any other feat requiring cool calculation, steadiness, and agility. But are the guests listening to her? Not in the least: the conversation is fast and furious, rising and falling with the gradations of tone in the composition under performance until the final chord, when everybody is profuse in thanks, a comparative silence reigns for a short time, and another victim is selected. Let us enquire (apart from the question of art) who is benefited by this custom? Certainly not the performer herself; for even her vanity could not have been gratified, neither admiration nor wonder having been excited by her executive powers. Yet the system continues unquestioned: the hostess knows that there must be a "little music"—there *was* a "little music," and she has done her duty.

Let us now look down from this box at the opera, upon the pit-stalls, filled with an aristocratic audience. The opera is Verdi's. The Tenor has sung himself almost hoarse; and the Soprano can scarcely sustain her voice through the last act. Two murders have already been committed; and ominous thunder and lightning portend that the unfortunate lover (who has sung his "ut de poitrine" in the last scene) means to kill himself or somebody else before the storm is over. Verdi, we are told, is the "rage." Well, let us see how this universally admitted fact is confirmed on this occasion. Few of the audience are paying any attention to the music at all: some are yawning; others have passed to the next stage of weariness, and are fast asleep: large parties are gradually leaving the theatre, and the applause is languid, and evidently given rather as a duty than as an evidence of satisfaction. Yet because Verdi is "fashionable," everything he writes for the continental opera-houses must be re-produced in England: pit-stalls are occupied; boxes are filled; and lessee and subscribers are alike satisfied.

Now, it is often said that hard-hearted critics are constantly setting up true art as a bugbear to frighten the followers of fashion from the worship of their idol. Admitting this, for the sake of argument, is it too much to expect that the disciples of a false art should at least believe it to be true? If, when one of those stern disturbers of popular enjoyments we have mentioned throws off his cynicism, and, in a beneficent frame of mind, observes a congregation at its worship, he finds that there is little real faith in any of the assembly; that some are talking, some laughing, some yawning, and all weary,

has he not a right to conclude that such a creed only exists from the want of some zealous missionary devoting his best energy to convert its believers to a knowledge of something nobler, purer, and more in accordance with the higher aspirations of their nature? Let us take, for instance, a constant visitor at the music-halls, and ask him whether it is not one of the first requisites of a comic song that it should be comic. If he go to an entertainment to laugh, and does not laugh, he has a case against the manager of the establishment; and a sensible man would either express his disapprobation audibly, or seek some other amusement more in accordance with his wishes. Again, the lady at the evening party we have mentioned is at least justified in expecting some return for the labour she has bestowed in getting up so elaborate a piece of performance. It certainly may seem a sad alternative to be compelled to take refuge in good music; but the experiment is worth trying, seeing that so little interest is taken in the bad. A really genuine specimen of the art might attract the notice of two or three persons in a large assembly; and some pleasure would therefore at least be afforded to a section, however small, of the guests. In the case of the opera, it is notorious that the weakest music, although perhaps not the most popular, is certainly the most fashionable. A true lover of the art will crowd into the gallery to enjoy Beethoven, whilst a votary of fashion will sleep in a pit-stall through an opera by Verdi. If the holder of the pit-stall could purchase one half of the enjoyment experienced by the occupant of the gallery, he would no doubt be too happy to do so, even at double the amount he has paid for his stall; but he has long ceased to be a free agent in the selection of his pleasures: like the other instances we have mentioned, he has converted himself into a machine, and is acted upon by a motive power from without.

Upon those who have still sufficient independence to think a little for themselves, we especially urge the consideration of these truths. The object of music is surely neither to drive people away, to excite them to conversation, nor to send them to sleep; and if it can be proved that all these effects are constantly taking place as a natural consequence of the performance of bad works, why not give a fair trial to the good ones? At all events a new enjoyment is a sensation worth coveting; and there is always a certain pleasure even in mere contrast. If the higher class of music should act as a powerful opiate on the listeners, too, it must be remembered that the same persons might succumb equally to the effects of the lower class; and we think we may safely promise that the calming nature of good works will be the more likely to produce blissful and undisturbed dreams.

ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA.

GOUNOD's new opera *Romeo e Giulietta*, produced for the first time in this country on the 11th ult., considering the deserved popularity of its composer, was certainly one of the most interesting events of the season. A great deal is always said about the "temerity" of a composer who selects a subject already immortalised by a great poet; and we think it would be well if those who have already obtained a certain reputation were to weigh this matter well before they committed themselves for trial under such disadvantageous circumstances. That composers have succeeded in many of the settings of previously well-known poems and plays is no proof that they have been wise in attempting the task. Otto Nicolai's opera, founded upon Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, for instance, although full of beautiful music, is a failure as far as the principal character, *Falstaff*, is concerned: and even in Gounod's *Faust* the weakest part in the whole opera is *Mephistopheles*. What then has been gained by the selection of these subjects? Why force comparisons upon the minds of an audience, to the detriment

of works which experience has proved might have safely been judged on their own merits alone? It is evident that to develop Gounod's real strength, he must have a "garden scene"; and that the tenor and soprano must make love under the electric light, with a long and lingering farewell at the end; but why should the exquisite poem of *Romeo and Juliet* be cut into the conventional form of an operatic *libretto* for this purpose, when two lovers might be placed in the same situation in a story written especially for music; and consequently calling up no pre-conceived notions of poetical beauty which shall be detrimental to the composer? It is true that M. Gounod's love passages are most delicately conceived throughout his new work—and as *Romeo* and *Juliet* are the principal parts, he has thus far been happy in his choice of subject—but *Mercutio* is a signal failure; and the rest of the characters are equally destitute of any treatment which can recall to mind the wonderful individuality with which Shakespeare has invested them.

The story has been well adapted to the lyric stage by M. M. Jules Barbier and Michael Carré, although many liberties have of course been taken with the original text. In the version of the opera performed at the Paris *Théâtre Lyrique*, the overture includes a chorus of the principal characters on the stage, which is in fact a "prologue" to the work; but this has been most unaccountably cut out; and, as it now stands, the prelude to the opera, containing a most uninteresting and utterly misplaced *fugato*, is bald and uninviting in the extreme. The first act, a splendid ball-room scene, contains some light and pleasing music, without any particular meaning; the brilliant little waltz, exquisitely sung by Madlle. Patti, and encored, creating the first effect of the evening, although *Mercutio's* "Queen Mab" song is evidently intended to produce a marked impression. The instrumentation of this song is sparkling and fanciful; but the composition itself is laboured, and M. Gounod seems to have overtaxed his powers in the desire to give due effect to words already so well known. The "Madrigal," sung by *Romeo* and *Juliet*, is the first of the series of love duets flowing throughout the opera, and is treated by the composer in his happiest manner. It is replete with that grace and tenderness so observable in *Faust*; and proves without doubt that in these soft breathings of a youthful passion M. Gounod stands almost unrivalled. The *finale* of this act contains little worthy of notice; although we may mention that the thankless part of *Capulet* was well sung by M. Petit. In the second act we have the balcony-scene; and here, as may be imagined, occurs some of the best music in the opera. A cavatina for *Romeo* would have produced more effect had Signor Mario been in better voice; but he was hoarse throughout the evening, and it was an evident labour for him to sing at all. The duet between the two lovers, although full of charming passages, breathes little of the Southern warmth and impetuosity so exquisitely portrayed by Shakespeare; and notwithstanding that Madlle. Patti sung like a finished artist throughout this trying scene, the music was somewhat coldly received. Passing over the third act—which is chiefly remarkable for some lugubrious music (intended to bear an ecclesiastical character) for Friar Lawrence, a common-place quartet (encored), and a *finale*, which was so cut about as to lose all its effect—we come to the fourth act, in Juliet's chamber, which contains by far the finest and most spontaneous duet in the opera. This is in the composer's true style; and seems to show, as we have already hinted, that had he not been hampered with the reminiscences of Shakespeare's poetry, he would in many other portions have succeeded equally well. In this duet, too, occurs a lovely phrase which is often heard throughout the work, and always with renewed pleasure. The scene of the tomb in the fifth act is not remarkable for the happiness of its musical treatment; and indeed the death of the lovers is about as cold a climax as we remember in modern opera. The final duet is wanting in design; and although containing some excellent declamatory passages, produced little effect with a thoroughly wearied audience. Too much praise cannot be awarded to Madlle. Patti, who looked, acted, and sang the part of the loving and trustful *Juliet* to perfection. Of Signor Mario we have already spoken; and we must add that all the other parts were exceedingly well filled, Signor Cotogni's *Mercutio*, and Signor Bagagiolo's *Fra Lorenzo*, being especially worthy of commendation. The opera was excellently placed upon the stage; but in spite of the reputation of M. Gounod, the great success of the work in Paris, and the unquestionable merit of much of the music, we do not predict for it a lasting popularity with the English public.

CRYSTAL PALACE.

It is much to the credit of the large body of artists assembled on the occasion of the Festival Concert, on the 26th June, that they all gave their valuable services to the cause gratuitously. A gift so munificent should have been nobly imitated by the public; for it must be remembered that this artistic donation was voluntarily offered to the Restoration fund; whilst those who purchased tickets were merely paying for seats at one of the finest concerts of the season. So far then, unless we should hear of some handsome contributions to the fund, we must feel that the artists have taken the lead in a work which is so purely national that we should scarcely have expected even a formal public appeal to be necessary. In every respect the concert, as might be imagined from the vast talent assembled, was excellent. The first part, devoted to selections from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, was magnificently rendered. The solo vocalists were Madlle. Tietjens, Mesdames Rudersdorff, and Sainton-Dolby; Messrs. Sims Reeves and Santley, and it will be unnecessary to dwell on the excellent manner in which all these eminent artists interpreted the whole of the music allotted to them. The choruses, too, were given in a most perfect manner throughout,